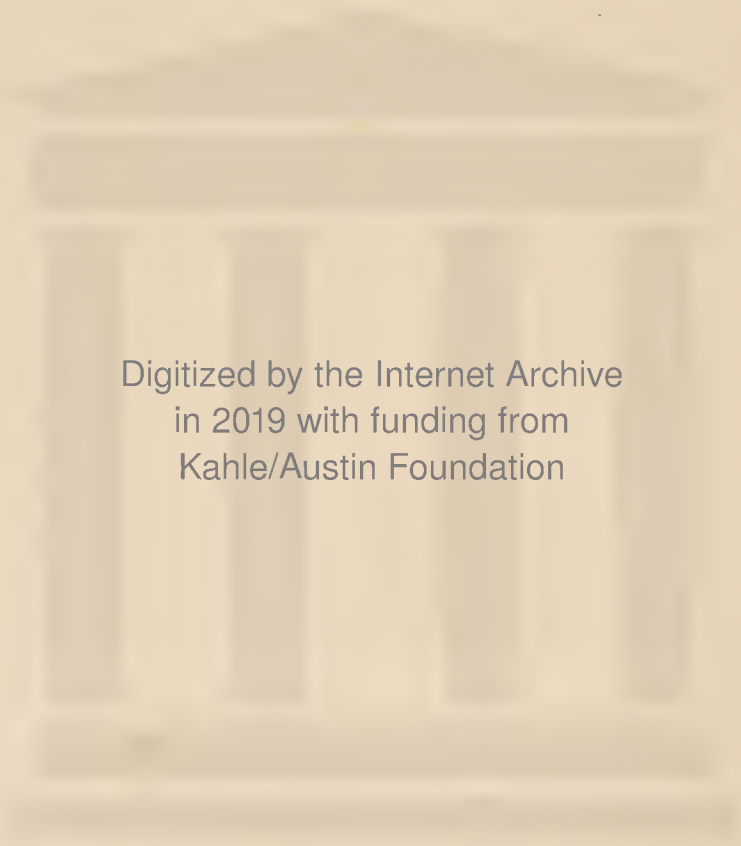
The MASTER of the SCIENCE of RIGHT LIVING

NEWELL DWIGHT HILLIS



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The Master of the Science of Right Living

BY

NEWELL DWIGHT HILLIS

AUTHOR OF

"RIGHT LIVING AS A FINE ART,"
"A MAN'S VALUE TO SOCIETY," ETC.

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THE USE OF THE STANDARD.

N the realm of trade commerce begins with measurements that are fixed and invariable. For the security of merchants, the guilds of London saw to it that the yard and foot were built into the walls of the Houses of Parliament, thereby furnishing to buyers and sellers an invariable unit of length. In our own national capital, also, the government has preserved standards by which grain may be weighed, oil or wine may be measured, and cotton and silk bought or sold; and when disputes arise these pre-existing standards determine the controversy. But we must not think that this recognition of the importance of standards

is an event of recent occurrence. Long centuries ago the kings of Egypt discerned that if the money standards were tampered with, if lying weights and measures were used in the market place, men would cease to buy and sell. For the encouragement of trade, therefore, Cheops built his pyramid, and in the very center of that mountain of rock he hollowed out the king's chamber, and there fixed the standards for the merchants and husbandmen. Before the farmer bought his field he carried his measuring line into the pyramid, and tested it by the unit of length. Before selling his oil or wine, he poured the precious liquor into the hollowed rock. Through all the centuries trade has gone forward upon the basis of these pre-existing measurements. In the realm of mathematics the students begin with standards called axioms. In the realm of metaphysics they begin with standards named intuitions. In the realm of music there are standards called the

musical scale, and the distance between the notes, and in the realm of art there are standards called the complementary colors. In the nation, also, this principle is seen to be important, and the code of the State and the Constitution furnish standards for the people.

MAN ASKS FOR A DIVINE STANDARD.

LL these facts prepare us to expect that in the kingdom of morals and the higher spiritual life men will desire some person who shall be to them a guide and standard in the art of right living. And it is in response to man's deepest nature and need that Jesus Christ seems to have entered the earthly scene, as an ideal toward whom the noblest spirits will struggle—one who dwells so far above them that He never disappoints, in that any may overtake and pass Him. In former times men so emphasized Christ's divinity that He dwelt a thousand leagues above men, in a supernatural realm. It

was of no more use to bid men walk in His footsteps than to tell them to create suns and stars. Now we know that Christ took upon Himself our infirmities; that He was tempted in all points like as we are; that He was bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, thought of our thought, will of our will; a fellow pilgrim with us, journeying toward the far-off kingdom of righteousness and character. To-day the youth fronts many problems—the problem of his life work, the problem of education, the problem of amusement, the problem of success with its burdens, the problem of failure with its cares. All these life problems fronted Christ as they front us. He, too, faced facts that would not down. He, too, fronted obstacles that seemed as firm as stone walls. He, too, was fretted by evil and enmity that defeated his plans. If for our instruction we follow Him into the home, into the market place, into the work shop, in the

fields, to the village church; if we watch Him in the hour when success came in like a flood and offered to sweep Him on to fame and fortune, or in the hour when His enemies rose up and destroyed His every hope, we shall find that in all these experiences He was master in the science of right living, and that His example has the stamp of authority. For what others taught, He did. Above all the distemperatures of life He rose and lived in the realm of radiant victory. As an example of right living, He stands forth solitary, the race's single mountain peak. The generals divide the kingdom of war, the poets and artists divide honors in the realm of the beautiful, but in the kingdom of character Christ has no competitor. When He appears all other moralists fade away, as the sun, arising, causes the stars to disappear through excess of light.

IDEAL MANHOOD OF CHRIST.

NOW, our appreciation of Christ as an exemplar for all classes and conditions of men will be the keener if we survey for a moment His matchless manhood and the radiant beauty and victory of His life. Such depth and fullness of life is His that His manhood seems like an ocean, whose rising tides lave every shore, fill every creek and bay, and bless every island with its dew and rain. For all classes, all temperaments and all varieties of need come to Him as to a standard, and while taking from Him the satisfaction of their need, go away without having impoverished Him from whom they take. John, the beloved disciple, comes to Christ

for winsome tenderness and goes away the apostle of love, diffusing on every side sweetness and light. Paul, the reformer, comes to Him for heroism and borrows from Him a courage that never flinches, an ardor that is never quenched, an indignation against evil that waxes more and more, and a tireless spirit that conquers the world. One disciple comes to Him as to a master teacher to learn the use of wise words, and goes away to free men from ignorance through the art of bringing truth to bear upon conduct and character. But over against this disciple who represents the ideal element in instruction stands James, the practical man, coming to Christ for instruction in good deeds, and goes away to teach the world that right thought within must be manifested in a life of service without. To Christ hath come the heroes who have destroyed tyranny; the patriots, who have laid the foundation of liberty; the reformers, who have dreamed

of a new social order, exiles and martyrs, who have joyfully yielded up life rather than prove false to their higher convictions. These represent but in brief and fragmentary forms the full splendor of Christ's full manhood. Indeed, any attempt to make an exhaustive statement regarding the ideal elements in Christ is like attempting to make a full statement about the richness of the sun. What grain or fruit or flower but has borrowed its richness from the lord of the summer? From the sun the sheaf borrows its golden luster. From the sun the cluster borrows its purple hue. From the sun the apple borrows its blushing beauty; even the modest arbutus and the low-lying snow-drop trace their delicate loveliness to the morning light, while the ruby and the sapphire receive from the same source their solid brilliancy.

HIS UNEXPLORED GREATNESS.

HRIST is example for the radical and example for the conservative. He is example for the idealist, and also for the practical man of affairs. He is ideal for man with his strength, but also for woman with her tenderness and beauty. He is example for sinners, and this sinless one is also the standard for saints. All fragmentary excellencies that are distributed among men high and men low, are gathered up and made beautiful in the unified splendor of His glorious character. By reason of the limitations through ignorance and sin, it is probable that there are whole ranges of His divine manhood that have not yet dawned upon our vision.

Let us confess that His nature is a universe not fully explored. In science each new addition to the telescope brings new worlds into sight. The schoolboy, walking home in the dark, needs a handful of stars to guide him, and the heavens supply the schoolboy's need. Grown old in reflection and study, some Lockyer needs a larger world. Straightway and in response to his needs and his new glass, yonder star breaks in two, becomes double, the two orbs, thought to be a unit, swing apart, with millions of miles separating them, and the astronomer's need is satisfied, while he wonders, worships and adores. The character of Christ is a world that grows with our growing life. Confessing our limitations, we must affirm of Him, that now we see through a glass darkly, and know only in part that radiant one whom at length we shall see face to face.

THE PROBLEM OF OBSCURITY AND PREPARATION.

MONG the life problems let us mention the problem of obscurity and preparation for men's life work, the problem of rest and recreation, the problem of work, of friends and enemies, of temptation and of defeat and success. After what manner did Christ show Himself to men in the way of bearing His obscurity and preparing for His life work? In general it may be said that nothing tests character like standing and waiting. 'It is hope deferred that makes the heart sick.' Too long postponement of victory takes the nerve out of the arm and the spring out of the will. In the

gymnasium the physical director cautions boys against hanging too long upon the ladder, for in a few seconds the nerves and muscles of the arm relax, and the body falls. But change of exercise and variety of motion refreshes the arms and lends strength to the youth. Not otherwise is it with the heart. The man of resource can wait, only he must not be asked to wait too long. There are boys who look longingly toward the threshold of the college, but the bodily necessities are rigorous, and the college education is denied them. There is many an unknown youth who is doomed to dig and delve, and who conceals within the latent power of Hugh Miller or Elihu Burritt. The years come and the years go, and he grows hopeless. But what shall we say of those eighteen silent years in the story of Christ? Was obscurity ever so deep? Did postponement of plans ever mean the waste of gifts so divine? The power that invents a tool,

develops a business, leads an army, works or controls men, asks for daily companionship with men. But to fashion an intellectual and moral system demands leisure and years of study and reflection. Yet just what was given to the great scholars from Plato to Milton, Bacon and Goethe, was denied Christ. At twelve years of age He was fully conscious of His unrivaled gifts. Great thoughts and dreams and visions surged through His mind with all storm. Events were big with mystery. A thousand hopes glowed and throbbed and burned within Him. History records a few instances of early mental development —Mozart playing sonatas at twelve, John Stuart Mill reciting whole pages of Latin, Greek and history at the same age. Our admiration for these examples of wisdom in childhood is tempered by the fact that their work was all memoriter work, while Christ reasoned with the teachers in the Temple, and asked them questions touching the

deepest things in life and philosophy. Realms into which His heart had felt its way, and perhaps reason followed halting after.

THE USES OF LEISURE.

ND when these godlike gifts stirred within Him, what eager longing for leisure, for opportunity to listen to the great masters! Those precious years for memory named fifteen and sixteen, came, and went again, and still He toiled at His bench. At twenty began the years when reason asks for arguments, and acquires skill in handling them, and these years, too, went again. At thirty He was still drudging at his manual labor and said farewell forever to his intellectual ambitions. For others hope has been deferred. Many a youth and maiden, many a hero and martyr, many a widowed mother, a wife, has to stand and wait. Not one of

these ever sounded such agony of heart break as Christ, through those eighteen years of veiled obscurity. Some there are who love endless physical labor, as naturally as the tortoise loves the mother earth. What if beside the tortoise stands an eagle imprisoned and tethered in the barnyard? All day and all the night long, the wounded eagle stands, unconscious of hunger, and of food beside it, unconscious of thirst and the water in the vessel, unconscious of the cord that binds it down, stands straining its vision toward that black speck in yonder cloud, and remembering only that it was made to soar above those clouds and look the sun in the face. And Christ? His waiting was not like that of others. Professor Tyndall says, "Copernicus pondered his great-work for thirty-three years; Newton for nearly twenty years kept the idea of gravity before his mind, and for another twenty years he dwelt upon his discovery of fluxion; Darwin for twenty-two years pon-

dered on the problem of the origin of the species and doubtless would have continued to do so had he not found Wallace upon his track." But waiting for these sons of strength was attended by leisure for study, by freedom from financial worry. The long years also were crowded with preparation for announcement that was postponed and the joy of anticipated announcement mitigated the sorrow of the delay, and the foresight lent a quiet happiness to the years of preparation. No such foresight was possible unto Christ, who toiled at His bench, accepted the ignominy of His lot, saw the years consumed by His drudgery, as snowflakes are consumed in a river, concealed His hidden agony, fed His secret hopes, restrained His ardor in wise patience. Having in no wise injured Himself by fretting, having now hurled Himself against events, as a bird may beat bloody wings against the bars of its cage, at last through serenity, He developed, midst

untoward circumstances, the very gifts of mind and heart that were necessary for His divine task. Of Jesus, the Carpenter's Son, we may say: "His victories rebuke us."

THE PROBLEM AND WORK.

FTER what manner does Christ show Himself as Exemplar touching the problem of work? For all men the task of earning one's livelihood is almost the first task. To God's gospel of love, Nature adds her gospel of work. Not all young feet can cross the threshold of a university founded by men. There is one university that is open to all, the university of work, founded by God. There daily duties are the teachers and there men are graduated as self sufficient, with overflowing gifts for the service of others. What nothing else can accomplish, work does for the soul. The river keeps itself pure by running and turning mill wheels. Once

the river ceases to move and spreads out over the plain it becomes stagnant, ruins the meadow by depositing its mud, poisons the air, fills the land with pestilence and death. Every idler in the community is a source of peril—by his very idleness tempting others to spoil him of his treasure, or else through sheer restlessness going about to spoil others by his sin. If the state could put all its idle people in prison, nearly all problems would be instantly solved. Work is a wise teacher. It reveals the strength in the youth and also his weakness. Work is chief nourisher in life's feast. By exercise it leads the faculties from immaturity toward full development. Work is a joy producer. The consciousness of having done something makes the man feel as if he were akin to God Himself. There never was man who did not exult as he looked over the field whose bareness he had covered with ripe grain, or looked out upon the swamp that he had drained

and made habitable, or looked upon the forest out of which he had carved a homestead. Who is wise enough to find out the marvelous ministry of work? When a potter lays his mud upon the wheel, the very motion of that wheel will shape the mud into artistic forms, and if only the potter will now and then give a touch here and a touch there, the mud, through motion and work will take on the lines of a beautiful vase. One of the most pregnant sayings in the life of Christ was, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." For Christ was essentially a working man. From the beginning to the end of His career He was simply one of the laboring people. He was not a preacher. Indeed, almost never, with one or two exceptions, only, was He permitted to preach in the synagogue. He was not a scholar who took all knowledge for His province and lived in a library. He was not a lecturer who studied for eight months and gave the

people the result of His researches in the next four. He was simply a hard working man, making doors, putting in windows, repairing shingles in the roof, cutting out timbers for the house or granary. He was a very poor man, so poor that during the few weeks when He did public work He was solely dependent upon the gifts of a few rude fishermen and the little company of women who believed in His work. Perhaps the most significant sneer that was ever cast upon Him was based upon the fact that He was a workingman. When they heard Him confessing that He spake as never man spake, the Pharisees turned away, saying, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" As if the fact that He was a laboring man terminated discussion and closed the incident forever.

HE TOOK THE STING OUT OF LABOR.

FOR the people of that day despised manual labor. The patrician classes in Athens and Rome would not speak to a man who gained his living with his hands. The unreasonable prejudice against manual labor has come down to our day. In Regent street, London, Carlyle one day saw an English woman descend from her carriage. Tripping at the door she dropped a purse and handkerchief, and a working man quickly sprang forward and handed her both. But as she took them, instantly her chin went into the air; she had less thought of thanking him than if he had been a dog of the street, and as Carlyle said, her attitude published the thought of

England's upper classes, "There is a great gulf fixed between you and me, and I cannot go down to you." And yet it is the example of Christ, and the teachings of the Christian church that has redeemed physical toil from its degradation. It was the way in which Christ handled the problem of work that has robbed the physical occupations of their sting and ignominy. Remembering the Carpenter's Son, Robert Burns felt that he need not sing the less sweetly because he had held the plough handle. Remembering this Carpenter, Carlyle declared, "The true hero is the man who knows his work and does it." Gone forever the day when men think that holding the plane or plough makes impossible wisdom for the intellect, culture for the heart, or beauty for the life. He who trained Himself at the bench and read in the "tear stained book of poor men's souls has taught the world that hard work and the disciplined muscle may be wedded to a

well cultured mind, a glowing sympathy, the highest genius and a life overflowing with benevolence."

THE GOSPEL OF CULTURE:

FTER what manner did Christ show Himself in the realm of the higher spiritual life and its culture? What was Christ's attitude toward the synagogue and the preaching service, and the customs of worship, is one of the most fascinating of questions. In general, there are two classes who refuse to recognize the obligation of systematic worship; refuse to join a church, and regularly avoid the house and the hour dedicated to the culture of the spiritual faculty and life. The first man is a non-worshiper on Sunday morning, because he worships all the week through. Nature, he says, is his temple; the open glades in the forest are his cathe-

dral aisles, the birds are his choir; the white clouds, rising heavenward, are his prayers; and the rustle in the treetops the only speech from God that his soul doth need. The other man goes to the opposite extreme, and declares that nothing is sacred. He recognizes no need, is conscious of no burden for which he needs strength, and no spiritual height whose steeps ask guidance and help for reaching their top. And whatsoever sympathy he has for chapel or church is based upon a patronizing recognition of the weakness in others whom he considers lower than himself. After what manner does Christ show Himself as an example for the development of those faculties of love and trust in God, that were the crowning qualities of His divine life? Martineau hath answered this question in words of singular beauty. "In the critical hour of Christ's life He went up to the village synagogue on the stated day of rest, nothing newer, nothing higher; but

just the place and time which had been sacred to the fathers. What? Had He not risen above that? Could the dull preachings and the drawling prayers say anything to Him? What charm could He longer feel in these childish Sabbath usages? The decent dress, the restful hours, the flowing together of families, the walking to the house of God in company? Did not He above all live in a constant air of divine communion? Do what He might, go where He would, was He not always with the Father—Himself a better Sanctuary than He could ever find? Yet, at Nazareth, where He had been brought up, He went, as His custom was, into the synagogue on the Sabbath day." For Christ in His highest moods, was perfected through the practice of the higher spiritual life. Habit, routine, did for His mind and heart what system does for us. There is no necessity of worship that is laid upon the rudest peasant that was not recognized

as a duty laid upon Him, by Christ Himself. Evening and morning and noon He lifted up His voice in prayer. For Him, also, precious the hour of worship, when the soul rises into the realm of silence and mystery. In reverie and worship the soul bathes itself in the divine ether until the grime is cleansed from the soul's garments, and ardor returns to the jaded sense. Ours is a world where flowers and fruits reach their full perfection in darkness just before day. And the soul enters into its highest mood when in a luminous hour, on the Sabbath day, it rises through the pathless air, exhaling hope and love and aspiration toward the unseen God.

THE PROBLEM OF TEMPTATION.

LIFE'S fourth problem concerns the discipline of temptation. Every life means conflict. Character is a victory after great fight. The cessation of business each night is a temporary truce; in the morning men become combatants, and the strife is renewed. Evil is as universal as invisible dust in the all-embracing air. The saint is a man who is carried off the battlefield upon his shield, victorious in the long warfare against ignorance, passion and sin. The mystery of evil is as old as the universe. And Christ was the first who brought a solution of the problem. Other men have been tempted, and strained to the last point before break-

ing; but not one hath ever suffered temptations so prolonged; so fierce; and of flame so all-consuming. After his forty days in the wilderness, where He was tempted toward reason; and tempted toward ambition; and tempted on the side of ease and honor; and came out of the fierce flames without the smell of fire upon His spotless garments—after that He spake with authority. He had listened to the voice of the sirens, and; listening; had turned away. He had looked upon Satan made beautiful as an angel of light; and looking; had turned His back. He knew as none others did the witchery of passion; the spiced sweets in the cup of sin, the honors and emoluments that are offered for deflections from honor; that lead many a youth to sell the higher ideal for a lower good. With Him; evil was not a theme that He had read about in books; but a living reality, that He had met and mastered. And having fought and conquered;

He stood forth, a brother, full of sympathy, and with tender hands He lifted the transgressor, led Him along the pathway of thorns and pains toward the far off heights of holiness. And to-day there is no youth who hath been snared by temptation, no man who hath weakened his will through strong drink, no outcast who hath dimmed and blurred the divine image, in the soul, not one who, having made a thousand resolutions, and broken them all, has lost all hope in himself, but can lift his eyes toward Christ, who knew, Himself, the Via Dolorosa. And, with the sympathy of a divine Savior, whispers, "Out of every temptation I will make a way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."

THE PROBLEM OF WEALTH.

IFE holds another problem, the problem of prosperity and defeat. After what manner did Christ show Himself to men touching success and failure? Overthrow hath its burden, and success hath a burden equally great. Prosperity is a test; few, very few, can endure it. Every form of power carries peril. One youth harvests wisdom, and becomes a scholar, and from his height of wisdom looks down upon the ignorant multitudes, unconscious of his selfish narrowness. One becomes wealthy, and straightway forgets the pit from which he was digged. He builds a palace remote from his old associates, he pulls down his

curtains, he blinds his eyes to the sight of the world's sorrow and dulls his ears to the cries of distress, and dwells aloof from the poor upon whom Christ had compassion. Recently, a man was elected to a public office, whether governor, or senator, or representative, or mayor, we need not say. When a companion from childhood, who had assisted in his success, called upon him recently, and addressed him by the term used for fifty years, the official, made drunk by the draught of public honor (if the brain is small and feeble enough, scientists tell us that one drop of weak wine makes the brain maudlin), drew himself up in stately reserve, exclaimed, for example, "Governor, if you please," and put a thousand leagues of distance between himself and his old friends.

Strange that prosperity could so easily destroy! Passing strange that when Alexander is victorious in his campaign, he brings together the stores of wine that he

has captured and drinks himself to death in a night. Stranger still that when Atilla the giant general, wins the stronghold of his enemy, and also the most beautiful woman of her day, he should take from the stores in her castle the honey and wine in a quantity larger than had ever been consumed before by a bridegroom, and slew himself before the evening of that self-same day. And to Christ came the peril of prosperity, and He passed at a single leap from obscurity to the throne of influence. Enthusiasm rose in flood tides. His name was upon all lips. His fame filled the land like the rising sun. He moved the people as the summer wind sways a waving grain. The people tried to take Him by force and make Him king. "Become our leader, we will follow your banners, one solid regiment, in which a nation marches. We will hurl the Roman from the land. The golden hour has come. And the man has come with the hour." Will He swerve a

hair's breadth from the narrow path of right? In that critical moment He was as true to His ideal at whatsoever cost, as the needle to the pole. "My kingdom is not of this world." Calmly and tranquilly He put away the proffered honor. Serenely He watched the multitudes melt and vanish. When a few days had passed, only the twelve remained loyal, and these hesitated, and for a time it was uncertain whether they would not go away, and leave Him solitary in the desert. What an example of victory over godlike temptation! What a support for the hero and the patriot and the martyr, standing hesitant between pain and fidelity to their higher convictions. No youth, tempted in the heated moments of the bank, or market place, or counting room, or legislative hall, but finds stimulus and guidance in the way in which Christ met the problem of success.

THE PROBLEM OF FAILURE:

UT He was equally victorious over the problem of failure. Soon friends became neutral, disciples became traitors, enemies became malignant. He found Himself deserted and alone. The iron entered into His soul. His cup of agony was full. The angel of trouble attacked Him, and the wounds sapped away His last drop of blood. The common people preferred a burglar, Barabbas, before Him. That narrow path of duty that avoided the easy plains of prosperity now lay straight toward the furnace of adversity. But as He never swerved a hair's breadth to secure ease and honor, now He never swerved a hair's breadth to

avoid agony and shame. In the piteous hour of His crucifixion He rose radiant and victorious, the lasting example for all who walk the Via Dolorosa, and drink the cup of pain to the very dregs. How beautifully Sidney Lanier hath summarized the story of Christ as a master of right living in the realm of failure.

" 'Into the woods my master went,
Clean forspent, forspent.
Into the woods my Master came,
Forspent with love and shame.
But the olives they were not blind to Him,
The little gray leaves were kind to Him;
The thorn tree had a mind to Him
When into the woods He came.

" 'Out of the woods my Master went,
And He was well content.
Out of the woods my Master came,
Content with death and shame.
When Death and Shame would woo Him
last,
From under the trees they drew Him last:
'Twas on a tree they slew Him—last
When out of the woods He came.' "